

**CITY OF BRIDGEPORT  
CHARTER REVISION COMMISSION  
SPECIAL MEETING  
FEBRUARY 7, 2012**

**ATTENDANCE:** Cathleen Simpson, Chair; George Estrada, Vice Chair; Florisca Carter, Secretary; Harry Weichsel; Charles Valentino, Sr.; William Marshall (6:25 p.m.)

**OTHERS:** Atty. Steve Mednick, Atty. Ed Bailey, City Attorney Mark Anastasi; Council Member Angel dePara, Council Member Susan Brannelly

**CALL TO ORDER**

Ms. Simpson called the meeting to order at 5:40 p.m. A quorum was present.

**APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES OF JANUARY 31, 2012 PUBLIC HEARING**

**\*\* MR. VALENTINE MOVED THE JANUARY 31, 2012 PUBLIC HEARING MINUTES  
\*\* MR. ESTRADA SECONDED.  
\*\* THE MOTION TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE JANUARY 31, 2012 PUBLIC  
HEARING MINUTES AS SUBMITTED. PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

**EDIT, REVIEW, REDLINE AND DISCUSSION OF THE PROVISIONS OF THE  
CHARTER.**

Regarding Chapter 3, Atty. Mednick said that one thing he noticed in the chapter on the Mayor is that the Power to Appoint should be clearly laid out in both the Mayor's section and the Council section.

Atty. Mednick said that there was a reference to fact that the Mayor was an ex-officio member of the Boards and Commissions except on the Planning & Zoning and the Zoning Board of Appeals in the section, also, which appears to be the only reference. This may need to be clarified.

The Commission then moved to Chapter 4, which covers the duties of the City and Town Clerks. Atty. Mednick pointed out that there is a certification program for the Town Clerks and this should be referred in the Charter. While it is not mandatory, certification should be encouraged.

The discussion moved to some of the language that refers to the vote or order of the City Council regarding the duties of the City Clerk.

Mr. Estrada asked why someone would not want to be certified as a Town Clerk. Atty. Mednick said that the certification has a time period attached to it, such as four years, and is not required

by the State. Mr. Estrada asked what would happen if someone failed to attain certification. Discussion followed about this issue.

Atty. Anastasi reminded everyone that it would be important to remember that recall is very political and not allowed in Connecticut. Removal from office requires due process and very specific grounds. Mr. Weichsel pointed out that it would be important not to create requirements that the City could not enforce. Requiring a qualification but having no recourse would create problems.

The discussion then moved to whether the Town Clerk should have more than one assistant designed in the Charter. Atty. Anastasi commented that the past practice was that the Town Clerk and the Town Clerk Assistant were part time positions.

Atty. Mednick said that he noticed that the Assistant City Clerk was a classified position, but the Assistant Town Clerk was not a classified position. This could be a potential conflict.

The Commission then reviewed the section on the City Council. Ms. Carter said that she had some comments about Section 5, subsection 2, f-1 & g2. Atty. Mednick said that there were some Boards and Commissions that the City Council Members could not serve on by State Law.

Ms. Simpson said that there had been numerous comments and concerns at the public hearing about the fact that many of the Council Members were also City employees. Discussion followed. Atty. Anastasi pointed out that there were certain Council members whose salaries were determined by the collective bargaining agreement, so they do not directly benefit by voting on the budget. He then reviewed the various boards and commissions that City employees were prevented from serving on by State statutes. If the Commission wished to limit the number of city employees on the Council by percentage, it would have to be done by changing the State statute. Atty. Mednick said that it would be important to have a clear ethics policy and a means to enforce it.

Mr. Valentino wished to know what would happen if the Council members were paid as Council Members and were also City employees. Atty. Mednick, and Atty. Bailey both stated that the employee would serve in both positions but only collect one paycheck.

*Mr. Marshall joined the meeting at 6:25 p.m.*

Vacancies and hold over terms were the items that the Commission discussed next.

Atty. Anastasi then reviewed the details around the recent changes by the State of Connecticut in terms of redistricting. It was determined that the City should follow the State law.

Mr. Valentino suggested that perhaps the Council should change from 20 members to 30 members and the top three candidates from each district would be elected. This issue will be mentioned when the Commission meets with the City Council.

Section 4b indicates that the City Clerk and the Assistant City Clerk should attend the City Council meetings. Atty. Anastasi said that both the City Clerk and the Assistant Clerk have been attending the meetings.

The discussion then moved to the definition of "emergency". He pointed out that a public emergency such as the tornado in downtown was different from an agenda item with a tight time constraint.

Mr. Valentino pointed out that there were no more State sheriffs, they are now Marshals. However there are sheriffs for the City of Bridgeport. Atty. Anastasi said that it would be important to know which items are covered by a Special Act and therefore can't be changed. Atty. Mednick said that he would check into this.

It was pointed out that Section 7 addresses "fly ash". It was stated that it would best not to tinker with this. Atty. Anastasi suggested that it would be important not to lose any of the powers that the City has now.

Removal of ice and snow from sidewalks and City streets was the next topic discussed.

Section 8 determines what actions are required to be done by ordinance. Atty. Mednick said that he would clean up the language. Regarding the publication of the legal notification process, Atty. Mednick said that he would like to insert some language that would help if the law changes so that electronic meeting notices could be posted.

Atty. Anastasi said that it would be important to have some clarification on the process in Section 9 when there are changes in resolutions or ordinances submitted. A recent issue arose when color coding was used on a revised resolution. Discussion about the method for updating laws followed.

Section 10 was the next passage considered. It was noted that the heads of some of the Commissions were referred to as "president" and in others; they are referred to as "chairman".

The Council leadership positions were discussed next. Atty. Anastasi said that he would encourage the majority of the leadership positions be moved to the Code of Ordinance. This will be discussed with the Council members. He noted that many of the Council leadership offices are not reflected in the Charter.

Atty. Anastasi said that he had a problem in Chapter 6 regarding the Department of Policy and Management [DPM], since it is always referred to as the Office of Policy and Management

[OPM]. Atty. Mednick said that he would like to bring sections like this into a Departmental Section. Discussion then followed about changes in this area.

Atty. Mednick pointed out that it would be important to note how someone is appointed to the various offices.

The question of why the Board of Education was separated out in terms of finances arose. Atty. Anastasi gave a brief overview of the process. He said that the City allocates a lump sum and the BOE has their own Finance Department. When asked who certifies the BOE purchases, Atty. Anastasi said that he does not know how they handle it. Atty. Bailey said that he believed that BOE has a parallel structure similar to the City's. Discussion followed about this.

The Commission then briefly reviewed the section on the Law Department. Atty. Anastasi then gave an overview of the positions, such as Associate Attorney and those who are appointed.

Atty. Anastasi said that Section 4 deals with the ongoing issue of having a lawyer to represent the Council and the departments. He said that there had been requests in the past to have an independent counsel for the City Council, but that he was not in favor of this, as it would simply result in unnecessary conflict.

#### **DISCUSSION OF FACT-FINDING MEETING IN MARCH.**

Atty. Mednick explained that the next few meetings would be a series of Special Meetings due to issues with posting notification. He distributed an updated meeting calendar to the members.

#### **ADJOURNMENT**

**\*\* MR. VALENTINE MOVED TO ADJOURN.**

**\*\* MR. ESTRADA SECONDED.**

**\*\* THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

The meeting adjourned at 7:45 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Sharon L. Soltes  
Telesco Secretarial Services